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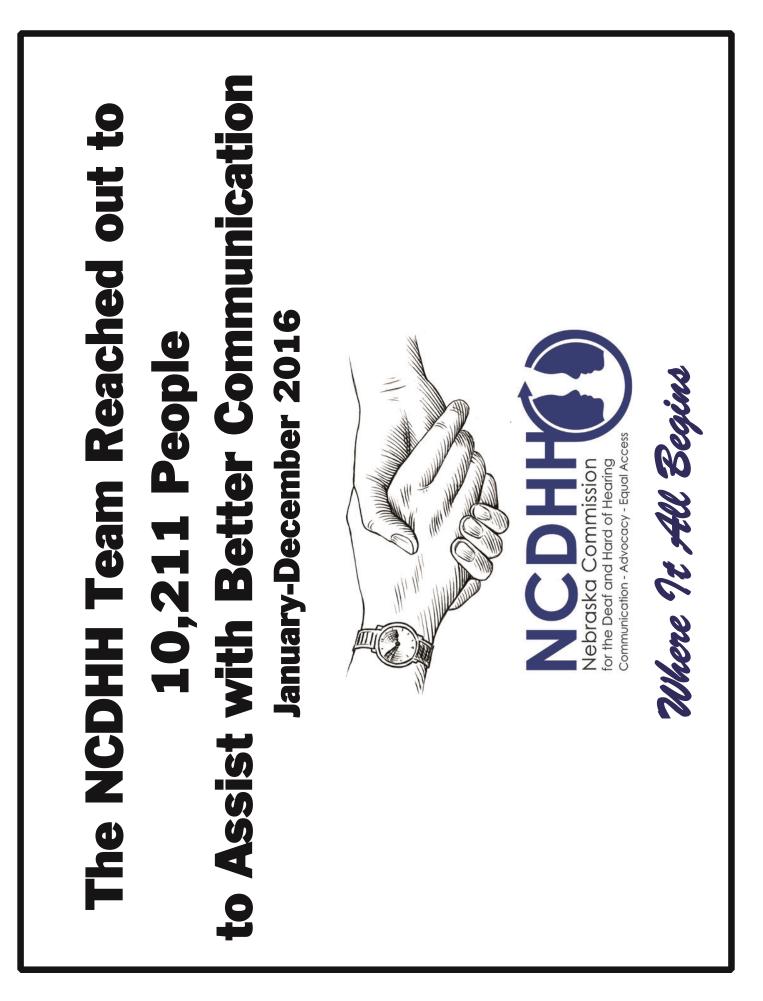








ANNUAL REPORT NCDHH Losson Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing





Pete Ricketts Governor

Margie Propp Chairman of the Board Lincoln

Dr. Frank Turk Vice Chair Omaha

Dr. Peter Seiler Secretary Omaha

Dr. Marc Brennan Board Member Omaha

John Hogue Board Member Falls City

Jeremy Fitzpatrick Board Member Omaha

Dr. Carol Lomicky Board Member Kearney

Dr. Stacie Ray Board Member Lincoln

Norm Weverka Board Member Brainard

John Wyvill Executive Director john.wyvill@nebraska.gov March 10, 2017

Governor Pete Ricketts Office of the Governor Post Office Box 94848 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4848

RE: 2016 Annual Activities Report

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing primarily strive to provide access and equitable opportunity for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing citizens of Nebraska, conducive to achievement of maximum participation and productivity in society. As a proactive and reactive state agency, the Commission strives to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation, and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of the mainstream for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing.

Some of the notable 2016 highlights of more than passing merit include:

- o Hired an Education Advocate
- o Hired a Behavioral Health Coordinator
- Collaboration with Jr. National Association of the Deaf (Jr. NAD) for meeting and Resolution with Governor Ricketts and Jr. NAD President Isabella Graves
- Worked with Nebraska Association of the Deaf to facilitate Governor Ricketts Town Hall Meeting with Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing
- Collaboration with Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to complete the technical assistance guide for changes to Rule 51
- Establishment of the Education Task Force including teamwork with education representatives in Nebraska as well as members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and organizations.

Included in this report are more notable highlights as well as all the work our agency has done throughout Nebraska to continue to make life for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing "the good life".

Sincerely,

Mariebra

Ms. Margie Propp Chairperson

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Communication Advocacy Equal Access

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State Statutes

The following is a partial listing of services mandated by Nebraska Revised Statutes:

1. Inventory services available for meeting the problems of persons with a hearing loss and assist such persons in locating and securing referral to such services. Services that the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing offers include hearing aid banks for individuals with financial needs; text telephones (TTYs) and assistive device loan programs, newsletters and making information available to the general public regarding hearing loss.

2. License interpreters under N.R.S. § 20-150 to § 20-159 and prepare and maintain a roster of licensed interpreters. The roster shall include the type of employment the interpreter generally engages in. The roster is made available to local, state and federal agencies and is used for referrals to private organizations and individuals seeking interpreters.

3. **Promote the training of interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons.** NCDHH conducts skill assessments of interpreters by using the Mid-America Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST). NCDHH sponsors workshops and other learning opportunities in cooperation with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the national association of sign language interpreters.

4. Assist Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in accessing comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services. A Mental Health Specialist provides assistance, education, and training to mental health therapists regarding Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals' communication needs. A five-member advisory committee reviews the activities of programs quarterly.

5. Conduct a voluntary census of Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in Nebraska and compile a current registry. NCDHH makes an effort to identify Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans throughout the state via online registration, mailings and interaction.

6. **Promote awareness and understanding of the rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed by the federal government in 1990, protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability. To promote understanding and awareness regarding hearing loss, NCDHH provides presentations, distributes information through fairs and conventions, conducts sensitivity training, such as workshops, and develops informational brochures.

7. **Promote expanded adult educational opportunities for Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons.** NCDHH partners with agencies and service providers at major events to expand adult education opportunities including seminars on national issues, technology and various training opportunities.

8. Promote statewide communication services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons. NCDHH drafted legislation that established the statewide telecommunication relay system and the equipment distribution program. NCDHH works in tandem with the Public Service Commission to provide free specialized telephone equipment to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans. NCDHH also offers sign communication classes to state agencies.

Statutory Authority

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was created by LB101 in 1979 by the Nebraska Unicameral. The duties and responsibilities of the Commission can be found in N.R.S § 71-4728 - § 71-4728.05 and § 20-150, § 20-151, and § 20-156, 2004.

Agency Vision

As a proactive and reactive state agency, the Commission strives to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation, and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of the mainstream for all Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

Agency Mission

The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing; to achieve equality and opportunity in social, educational, vocational, and legal aspects impacting their daily lives; and to enhance and monitor access to effective communication and telecommunication technology.

Agency Principles

The Commission's responsibilities include the following areas:

• Collect data and disseminate information on Nebraskans who have a hearing loss, and conduct research in the area of Deafness;

• Develop communication processes involving the training and licensing of sign language interpreters statewide, and promote an awareness of hearing loss to state and local community agencies;

• Inventory, monitor and assess services available to people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The Commission's overall purpose is to ensure that people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have the opportunity to be productive citizens of the State of Nebraska.

2016 Highlights

"The new year brings time to reflect back on 2016 as we embrace the promise and opportunity for 2017. Below you will see a portion of highlights and accomplishments in the last year. Our exciting journey of making lives better for Nebraskans begins in 2017 one day at a time. What will we fill our pages with next?" -Executive Director, John Wyvill.

LR 412: By the direction of the NCDHH Full Board, Legislative Resolution 412, introduced by Nebraska Senator Dan Watermeier, is aimed to study ways to improve communication access for movie theaters in Nebraska to ensure a full movie theater experience. A study committee comprised of Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members and stakeholders was conducted to work with NCDHH to identify areas of concern, gather necessary research and explore ways to address access issues in movie theaters.

LR 463: The NCDHH Full Board encouraged the study of Legislative Resolution 463, introduced by Nebraska Senator Kathy Campbell, an interim study on hearing aid coverage costs for Nebraska families. A study committee comprised of interested stakeholders worked with NCDHH to identify areas of concern, explore various ways to address needs such as: how other states cover hearing aid costs, whether hearing aid coverage should be included as an essential health benefit, an examination of health insurance coverage options, and recommendations on how to improve the services being provided by the hearing aid banks. This was voted on by the Full Board to be tabled for further research and expected for a new interim study to be filed the next legislative session.

Jr. NAD Meeting with Governor: Seward High School student and Jr. NAD President, Isabella Graves, met with Governor Ricketts, along with other members of the Deaf community. Isabella met with Governor Ricketts to discuss her future plans after graduation. Isabella was presented with Legislative Resolution 432 by Senator Kolterman; to recognize Isabella as Junior NAD Ambassador and her bright future ahead.

Hearing Aid Bank Donations: Through collaboration with local hearing aid banks, Hear U Nebraska, Sertoma, and Lions Hearing Aid Bank, donations of hearing aids have dramatically increased. NCDHH works with these hearing aid banks that can provide used, refurbished hearing aids to those who qualify.

O'Neill, Neb. Town Hall Meeting: O'Neill, Nebraska was selected for the June 2016 Full Board Meeting as well as to host a Town Hall Meeting for area residents to voice questions, concerns, and suggestions on how better to serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in the region. In addition, NCDHH provided training and presentations to local law enforcement and senior centers.

NAD Conference: The 2016 National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Biennial Convention was held in Phoenix, AZ and held many great moments for Nebraska representatives. NCDHH Board Member, Dr. Frank Turk received the Senior Citizen Award; Nebraska Association of the Deaf (NeAD) President Jonathan Scherling received the State Excellence award; and Jr. NAD representative of Nebraska, Linsay Darnall Jr. received the Spirit of NAD award for his work with youth who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

2016 Highlights

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Ballpark: The 3rd Annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night was held on July 13th, 2016 at the Lincoln Saltdogs game. A representative from Jr. NAD threw out the first pitch and a nationally recognized Deaf Mime, Ricky Smith, performed the national anthem. A 'Silent Inning' was held during the 5th inning, no music or announcements, to show all attendees that individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing enjoy baseball, just like everyone else.

Hiring of Behavioral Health Coordinator: NCDHH hired Carly Weyers as our Behavioral Health Coordinator in August of 2016. Ms. Weyers is a graduate of Gallaudet University, with two Bachelor's degrees in Communication and Sociology. As Behavioral Health Coordinator, Ms. Weyers monitors and advises mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse professionals on how to best serve people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Zoo: The second annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo took place on September 25, 2016. The event was a tremendous success to raise awareness about the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The day included an animal signs class, interpreted animal encounters, and a Deaf Connect reading to children by Jr. National Association of the Deaf President, Isabella Graves.

Hiring of Education Advocate: NCDHH hired Jenny Corum as an Education Advocate. Ms. Corum provides assistance to clients who are experiencing educational, social or vocational needs in adjusting to being Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Ms. Corum's work is dedicated solely to work for advocating in the educational field and with education members throughout the state.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Town Hall Meeting: Through collaboration with NCDHH and Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Governor Ricketts hosted a Town Hall Meeting at University of Nebraska-Omaha to hear from the community with questions, suggestions and comments regarding communication access and employment in the state. This was the first Town Hall hosted specifically for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community by a Nebraska governor.

Educational Task Force: The NCDHH Full Board voted to create a task force to recognize and diagnose challenges and opportunities needed to improve education for students who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing in Nebraska. This task force unit, selected by the NCDHH Executive committee, is comprised of various leaders in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities as well as the educational field. This task force focuses on areas such as: Accountability, Competency, and Excellence in education.

Law Enforcement Task Force: The purpose of this task force is to develop the best method for Law Enforcement and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities to communicate with each other, to promote and foster interaction between the two communities, and information sharing among all stakeholders. The task force is comprised of stakeholders within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, emergency management and law enforcement agencies.

Full Commission Board

The Commission Board consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor subject to approval by the Legislature. Statue 71-4720 requires that a majority of the Commission members who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing shall be able to express themselves through sign language. The Commission members shall include three Deaf persons, three Hard of Hearing persons and three persons who have an interest in and knowledge of Deafness and hearing loss issues. The members are appointed to represent various domains as listed below:

Deaf Representatives Dr. Frank Turk Dr. Carol Lomicky Norman Weverka Hard of Hearing Representatives Regina (Gina) Frerichs John Hogue Jeremy Fitzpatrick Interest and Knowledge in Deafness and Hearing Loss Representatives Margaret Propp Dr. Stacie Ray Dr. Peter Seiler

Sign Language Interpreter Review Board

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was mandated in July 2002 to appoint members to the Interpreter Review Board to develop guidelines and promulgate regulations for assuring competencies for sign language interpreters. Regulations were crafted and approved to include assurances that sign language interpreters have and maintain minimum levels of competency to interpret for state entities, courts, police and probation officials. The Sign Language Interpreter Review Board provides advice to the Full Commission Board regarding language that would amend sections 20-150, 20-151,20-156, 20-159, and 71-4728 of current Nebraska Statutes. The members are appointed to represent various domains as listed below:

Health and Human Services Vonda Apking Sign Language Interpreters Pam Duncan Bethany Koubsky Deaf Representatives Jerry Siders Heath Focken Local Government Jessica Nickels, Nebraska VR Nancy Flearl, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing John Wyvill, Executive Director

Telecommunication Relay Advisory Committee

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was mandated in 1990 to appoint members to serve on the Relay Advisory Committee administered by the Nebraska Public Service Commission. The Committee advises the Public Service Commission on matters related to the telecommunications relay system, the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program and its operations. The Committee has seven members. The members are appointed to represent various domains as listed below:

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Norman Weverka Hard of Hearing Representative Diana McIntosh Public Service Commission Tim Schram Speech Impaired Vacant Telephone Industry Kim Remington Technical Advisor John Wyvill Gene Hand

Mental Health Advisory Committee

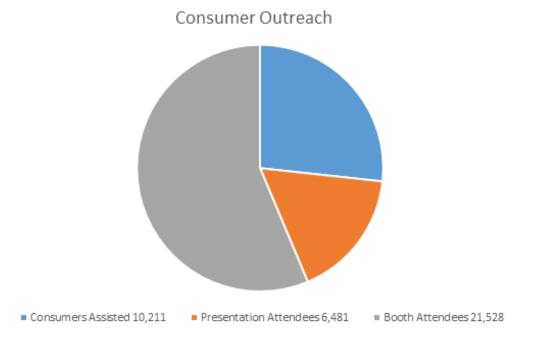
A special advisory committee is appointed by the Commission to serve for a three year term. The advisory committee meetings are held four times a year. The committee is to ensure full access of comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The Commission has appointed technical members representing various domains, listed below:

Counselor Position

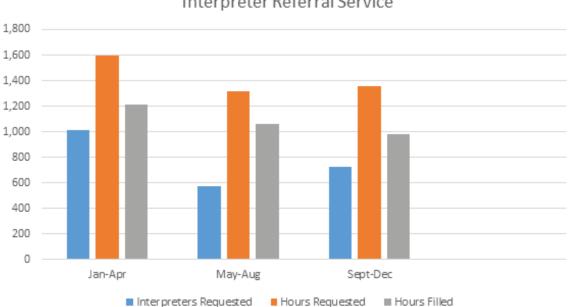
Ms. Tracey Mento, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska Mandy Leamon, Fremont Area Medical Center, Outpatient Psychiatric Services Lisa Vogel, West Maple Counseling Association **Human Services Position** Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell, Vocational Rehabilitation Kathleen Valle, CHI Health Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing John Wyvill Peggy Williams (January-June 2016) Carly Weyers (August-December 2016) **Technical Advisor** Ann Thompson, Heartland Deaf Abuse Advocacy Services Diane Meyer, Metro Area Regional Program Jill Bird, Southeast Nebraska Regional Program (January-July 2016) Tina Work, Sign Language Interpreter - Lincoln Karen Potter-Maxwell, Sign Language Interpreter - Omaha Jan (Loretta) Goracke, DHHS Division of Behavioral Health - Lincoln Barb Woodhead, Sign Language Interpreter – Lincoln (January-July 2016)

Information, Outreach and Referral Service

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is mandated to act as an information and referral service for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Below are statistics and figures to reflect a portion of the work the Commission has done in 2016.



The Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service receives requests to obtain a sign language interpreter, available via telephone or electronically. An after-hours emergency interpreter list is also available. The process to request an interpreter begins with the highest skilled interpreters being contacted first, based on the geographical location of the assignment. The chart below reflects, in 2016, the number of interpreters requested, number of hours requested, and number of hours filled through our Interpreter Referral Service.



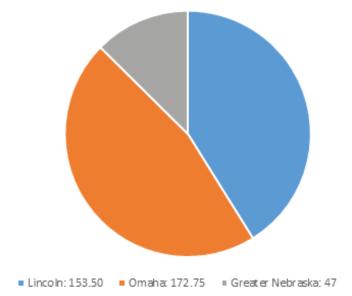
Interpreter Referral Service

Referral Service

The charts below gives reference to the number of hours that were filled and unfilled through the Commission's Referral Service. This data does not reflect the total number of hours interpreted in Nebraska; Sign language interpreters are regarded as independent contractors, they are also able to market their services outside of the Commission's Referral Service.

Filled Interpreter Request Hours by Region
 Interpreter Request Hours by Region
 Greater Nebraska: 246.50

Unfilled Interpreter Request Hours By Region



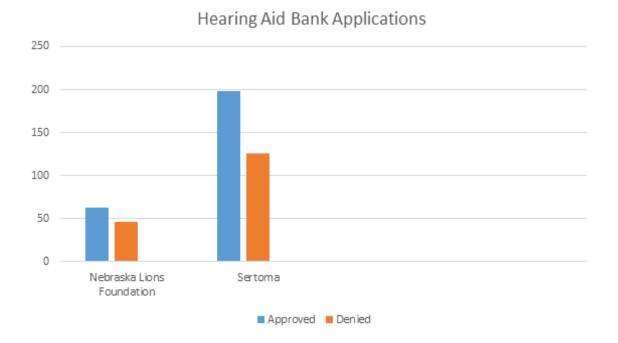
Statewide Communication Services

The State of Nebraska offers the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP). The goal of this program is to provide monetary assistance to those with disabilities to use the financial assistance for the purchase of specialized telephone equipment such as amplifiers, signaling devices and TTYs. Applications are available through the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The number of applications processed for NSTEP for 2016 was:

343

Hearing Aid Banks

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing works with the Barkley Memorial Center of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, HearU Nebraska, Sertoma, and the Nebraska Lions Foundation to provide hearing aids. Sertoma is an international organization whose purpose is to provide service to all mankind. Sertoma provides refurbished hearing aids to qualified individuals, ages 65 and older. Nebraska Lions Foundation promotes the collection, refurbishing and distribution of donated hearing aids to Nebraska Residents ages 19-64. Applications to these programs are available through the Commission. Below is a chart reflecting applications for both Nebraska Lions Foundation and Sertoma on applications approved and denied.



2016 Registry (voluntary)

				c g		- an car		
County	Deaf	Hard of Hearing	Hearing	g Hoh	Hoh/Low Vision		d Late Deafened 20	Speech Impaired
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adams	5	132	4	0	0	0	0	0
Antelope	0	22	1	0	0	0	0	0
Arthur	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Banner	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boone	2	45	1	0 0	1	0	0	0
Box Butte	2	65	3	0	1	0	1	0
							1	
Boyd	0	14	0	0	0	0		0
Brown	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buffalo	5	272	17	0	3	2	1	2
Burt	3	26	2	0	0	0	0	0
Butler	4	41	4	0	0	1	0	0
Cass	15	86	5	0	1	0	1	0
Cedar	1	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chase	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cherry	1	30	0	0	1	0	0	0
Cheyenne	1	43	0	0	0	1	0	0
Clay	1	35	2	0	0	0	0	1
Colfax	1	27	0	0	0	1	0	0
Cuming	1	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
Custer	1	59	2	0	1	2	0	1
Dakota	4	17	1	0	1	0	1	0
Dawes	1	52	0	0	1	1	1	0
Dawson	2	135	2	0	1	1	0	1
Deuel	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dixon	0	15	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dodge	11	173	2	0	0	0	0	1
Douglas	199	1679	70	0	16	10	5	12
Dundy	0	15	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fillmore	1	32	3	0	0	0	0	0
Franklin	1	26	1	0	1	1	0	0
Frontier	0	25	2	0	0	0	0	0
Furnas	1	41	2	0	0	0	0	0
Gage	4	68	2	0	1	0	0	0
Garden	3	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
Garfield	0	23	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gosper	1	17	1	0	0	0	0	0
Grant	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greeley	0	27	2	0	0	0	0	0
Hall	6	254	7	0	1	0	1	0
Hamilton	1	43	7	0	0	0	0	0
Harlan	0	16	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hayes	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hitchcock	2	8 30	2	0	0	0	2	0
Holt	5	65 5	2	0	1	0	0	0
Hooker	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Howard	3	48	5	0	0	0	1	0
Jefferson	0	30	2	0	1	0	0	0
Johnson	1	11	2	0	0	0	0	0
Kearney	0	59	0	0	0	1	1	0
Keith	2	47	2	0	0	2	0	0
Keya Paha	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kimball	1	31	2	0	0	0	0	0
Knox	1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancaster	107	737	42	1	6	0	5	4
		265	42 13					
Lincoln	10			0	3	2	2	1
Logan	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loup	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
Madison	9	134	3	0	1	0	0	0
McPherson	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
10								

2016 Registry continued

	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
McPherson Magnick	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merrick	2	46	2	0	0	0	0	0
Morrill	3	38	2	0	0	0	0	0
Nance	0	21	1	0	0	0	1	0
Nemaha	1	15	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nuckolls	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Otoe	7	53	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pawnee	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perkins	0	18	0	0	0	0	1	0
Phelps	0	49	0	0	1	0	0	0
Pierce	1	25	1	0	0	0	0	0
Platte	11	153	6	0	1	1	0	0
Polk	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	1
Red Willow	2	86	0	0	0	1	0	0
Richardson	1	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rock	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saline	5	52	1	0	1	0	0	0
Sarpy	50	383	18	0	1	0	2	2
Saunders	4	74	4	0	0	0	0	0
Scotts Bluff	13	399	14	0	2	1	1	1
Seward	4	54	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheridan	0	44	1	0	1	0	0	0
Sherman	0	34	4	0	0	0	1	0
Sioux	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stanton	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thayer	0	18	2	0	0	0	1	0
Thomas	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thurston	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	1	34	1	0	0	0	0	0
Washington	3	70	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wayne	0	22	1	0	0	0	0	0
Webster	1	21	0	0 0	Õ	0	0	0
Wheeler	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
York	3	53	3	0 0	2	0	0	0
	-		-	-	-	· ·		•

Personnel Directory

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